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Women on the move: Administrative data as a safe way to research hidden domestic violence journeys

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Abstract:

Domestic violence against women is a significant social issue within the United Kingdom, across Europe and globally. However, it is often difficult to research given the hidden nature of the violence, and the need for many women to continue to keep their experiences secret. This article presents research on women's relocation journeys, using administrative data from a funding programme which required England-wide monitoring from 2003-2011 on housing-related support services. This provided a sample of approximately 18,000 relocation cases per year – a total of over 140,000 journeys to access services – until the data became unavailable due to the end of the funding programme. The article presents some of the substantive findings on domestic violence journeys: the numerical scale and gendered nature of the journeys, the pattern of spatial churn across the country, the geographical scale and administrative boundary issues, and the evidence that women are often on the move both before and after accessing services. The article concludes that administrative data from services could and should be de-identified and used as a safe way to research women on the move due to domestic violence, and enable services and authorities to make better decisions on meeting their needs.

key words:

abused women; relocation; de-identified data; spatial churn; boundaries

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Introduction

Domestic violence against women is a significant social issue within the United Kingdom, across Europe and globally. However, it is often difficult to research given the hidden nature of the violence, and the need for many women to continue to keep their experiences secret because of ongoing risk from a known abuser – typically a male partner, husband or ex-partner. As a result, policy, legal changes and service provision are often based on partial understandings of women's and children's experiences and needs. In the UK, violence is criminalised, including the relatively recent offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships (Home Office, 2015). However, much domestic violence will not be dealt with as a crime for a range of reasons: it may not be reported to the police, or it may not be recorded if reported. In addition, the context of the relationship, and the remedy or outcome wanted by victims/survivors may mean that the criminal justice system cannot provide what they need. If women do use the criminal justice system, they may find it ineffective in its own terms; and there is attrition at every stage (Hester, 2005; Crown Prosecution Service, 2018). Crime data on domestic violence will therefore give a partial picture of domestic violence needs; though there is a high level of incidence: 1.1 million domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2017 (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

In recognition of under-reporting and under-recording of domestic violence crimes, the different nations of the UK run crime surveys which ask a sample of the population, aged 16

to 59 years, about their experience of crime. However, all such surveys sample from the household register and therefore exclude anyone in temporary accommodation – such as women staying in refuges, hostels or with family and friends due to domestic violence. Even so, prevalence is estimated as 1.2 million women in England and Wales having experienced domestic abuse in the last year (Office for National Statistics, 2017, p.1). For the first time, in 2017, the Office for National Statistics published incidence and prevalence data, alongside additional data from service providers, with the aim of “bringing together statistics to enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with at the local level within England and Wales”. However, data gaps remain. Walby (2006; 2007, p.5) has argued that “administrative data are in general unsuitable for the measurement of the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women because the majority of women who are victims of violence do not report this to any authority”, and she cautions that “no extrapolation from administrative data will ever tell us about the extent of the hidden violence against women” (Walby, 2005, p.193). The ongoing safety risks to women affect both their ability to disclose and their participation and visibility in research and official statistics; and the hidden nature of the violence can lead to under-estimations of the levels of abuse and a lack of understanding of women’s strategies to escape. A key problem is that policy and service decisions – including cuts – continue to be based on these partial data and understandings.

Bearing in mind such cautions, this article discusses how a particular type of administrative data – monitoring data from service providers – can be used to generate significantly increased knowledge about women who do access services. Not only do these data reveal women’s help-seeking actions, they can potentially be linked over time, and geographically across regions and to the national level, to reveal previously hidden trends, flows and patterns. Service data do not measure incidence or prevalence, but they do provide much

larger samples than would be available from either survey or qualitative methods. This article presents research on women's relocation journeys to escape domestic violence in the UK, using administrative data from a funding programme which required England-wide monitoring from 2003-2011 on housing-related support services. This included specialist domestic violence services, such as women's refuges, but also a wide range of accommodation and non-accommodation services used by women at risk of domestic violence. It therefore also indicates the services that women access in areas of the country where there are no specialist services (Coy et al., 2009). This provided a sample of approximately 18,000 relocation cases per year – a total of over 140,000 journeys to access services – until the data became unavailable due to the end of the funding programme.

The data are available at the individual level via Special Licence access from the UK Data Archive (Department for Communities and Local Government and University of St Andrews, Centre for Housing Research, 2012), where they were lodged after the end of the monitoring. Though the data were cleaned for presentation in annual reports of the funding programme, considerable further data processing was needed for this research, and this is outlined in the methodology section next. However, the data provide a particular opportunity for research on women's domestic violence journeys, enabling substantive findings on patterns and places, as well as demographics, which had not previously been able to be researched. Some of these findings will be discussed in the empirical sections of this article highlighting characteristics of women's hidden journeys, with relevance to decisions on policy and service provision. Four specific findings will be outlined: the numerical scale and gendered nature of the journeys, the pattern of spatial churn across the country, the geographical scale and administrative boundary issues, and the evidence that women are often on the move both before and after accessing services. The article will conclude by focusing on the

methodological opportunity of using administrative monitoring data, and the often fragmented availability of such data. The situation in England is that we know less about women and children's current help-seeking to escape domestic violence than we do about journeys ten years ago. This means that current decisions on service cuts and restrictions (Towers & Walby, 2012; Women's Aid, 2018) are being made by local authorities without the necessary evidence base.

Methodology

The analysis presented in this article is based on a mixed methods research project, aspects of which have been published (Bowstead, 2015a; Bowstead, 2015b; Bowstead, 2016; Bowstead, 2017). The focus here is on the use of administrative data from the Supporting People Programme Client Records and Short Term Outcomes systems, which were developed by Government¹ to record standard information about clients at the start and end of receiving services (ODPM, 2002). The Client Record system ran from April 2003 and the Short Term Outcomes system from May 2007, and records end with the end of the Programme in March 2011. Data monitoring was carried out by each service provider and submitted to the Client Record Office at the Centre for Housing Research (CHR) in St Andrews for data collection, processing and preliminary statistical analysis. Supporting People services provided support to a range of "Client Groups" and the Client Record therefore identifies both Primary and up to three Secondary Client Group for each case. However, this article mainly focuses on cases where the Primary Client Group code was "Women at risk of domestic violence", which was widened to "People at risk of domestic violence" in April 2009. In addition, the focus here

¹ Initially developed under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), subsequent reorganisation brought it under the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

on journeys means that the research is mostly on cases where the individual had changed accommodation at the point of accessing the service. This gave a total of approximately 18,000 cases per year, with around 9,500 women (over half with children) migrating across local authority boundaries to access services (i.e. internal migration) and around 8,500 relocating within their local authority (i.e. residential mobility).

England has a complex geography of administrative authorities, including both Unitary Authorities and two-tier authorities of District and County, and there were administrative changes during the period 2003-11 with some two-tier authorities becoming unitary. As a result, combining datasets across the years required processing of locations data. Additional data sources were used to identify the District location of services from the information in the datasets at the County level. For most cases, location data was also provided for the District location immediately before accessing the service, as well as a binary variable as to whether the individual had relocated to access the service. Similarly, at the end of service, location data was provided for the District location that the individual was remaining in or moving to. On most cases of starting a service, therefore, it was possible to identify location before accessing housing-related support and the location of the support; and for leaving the location of the service and location after leaving support. In this article, the discussion is of these two datasets – service intake and exit – separately, though it is intended to carry out analysis using a linking variable in future research.

The intake datasets also included basic demographic variables on age, sex, ethnic origin, age of accompanying children, and some information on disability and additional needs; and the exit datasets included some of these same variables. For analysis, some of these data were processed, such as to provide a binary variable on whether or not an individual was

accompanied by children. It needs to be remembered that the datasets were designed primarily to monitor the service provision and facilitate service management, and therefore do not necessarily provide ideal variables for research. In addition, the data were generated by frontline staff in hundreds of services and, despite data cleaning, will still include some data errors and omissions.

For the four key findings discussed in this article, the particular variables include the location variables which were processed to geocode the centroids of Local Authorities (District or Unitary). This enabled the generation of flow maps and the measurement of straight-line distances for migration journeys across administrative boundaries. Because the location data were only at the Local Authority level, no distance measurement was possible on the journeys of residential mobility. Totals of origin and service location data were also used to generate annual datasets with the 354 English Local Authorities (2001 boundaries) as the individual cases, plus Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Outside the UK as additional origins. Variables were generated on the frequency of Residential Mobility (i.e. women relocating within that Local Authority), frequency of Origin (i.e. women leaving that LA), and frequency of Service access (i.e. women arriving in that LA), as well as rates per 10,000 female population aged 15+ (Office for National Statistics, 2008, fig.9 (table)). These rates were used to generate choropleth maps² of rates of leaving, arriving, residential mobility and net leaving. Demographic variables on men, women and children will also be discussed, as well as housing tenure before accessing a service, and housing tenure after leaving a service.

The key methodological opportunities of using such data are the safety of using de-identified data which are at the individual level but not disclosive when used under the terms of the

² A choropleth map displays data by each pre-defined area (in this case local authorities) being shaded or patterned in proportion to the rate.

Special Licence. The sample is large, enabling statistical analysis with confidence in the significance of findings, and comprehensive in terms of these types of service across England. Other funding programmes may collect detailed monitoring data, but be restricted to specific local authorities, or major cities – such as London – or over a shorter period of time than the eight years of this programme. However, there have been challenges in processing the data, including the administrative boundary changes in 2009, and there is also the fact of the end of the comprehensive programme in 2011. Many of the services still exist, and will be generating monitoring data, though there have been significant funding cuts (Towers & Walby, 2012). However, the data are not being de-identified, aggregated and made available for research, making any comprehensive England-wide conclusions and plans harder than they were before 2011. In attempting to bring together a range of data sources on domestic abuse in 2017, the Office for National Statistics (2017) highlighted how partial the picture remains.

However, analysis of the data to 2011 enables key insights into help-seeking due to domestic violence, which will be discussed in the four sections that follow: the numerical scale and gendered nature of the journeys, the pattern of spatial churn across the country, the geographical scale and administrative boundary issues, and the evidence that women are often on the move both before and after accessing services.

The numerical scale and gendered nature of the journeys

The service intake data record unique access dates, though individuals may access more than one service over the eight years of intake data. The intake records are therefore unique instances of help-seeking across a wide range of accommodation and non-accommodation

services in every local authority in England, and this is therefore the unit of analysis discussed here. Issues of multiple moves and multiple service access have been discussed elsewhere (Bowstead, 2017), and it is intended to carry out further research on this in the future. Each year, over 20,000 women accessed services where risk of domestic violence was their primary need; and a further 2,500 to 3,000 where domestic violence was a secondary need. Of the women where domestic violence was the primary need, around 18,000 per year relocated at the point of accessing a service, just under half within the same Local Authority (47.2%) and the rest crossing local authority boundaries (52.8%). Even these basic totals provide new insights into women's help seeking, as they show quite a different pattern from the picture provided by just gathering data from specialist women's domestic violence services. Specialist services, especially women's domestic violence refuges, distinctively support women who need to move longer distances, generally to unknown places for safety, but they are not available in every local authority. Nearly three-quarters (65.2%) of the women who relocated to access services where domestic violence was their primary need accessed women's refuges (n=96,031), with others accessing other accommodation services (n=17,368) or non-accommodation housing support (n=33,859). Statistical analysis indicates that women accessing refuges were much more likely to have crossed local authority boundaries (Table 1), and to have travelled longer distances to services (Table 2). The statistically significant differences are highlighted by the shaded table cells, showing positive adjusted residual differences between the actual numbers ("count") and the "expected" numbers if there were no differences between categories. Therefore, this large dataset of housing-related support services enables analysis to include both women who use refuges, and the tens of thousands of women who do not use refuges, and may be less visible in other research.

| | | Residential Mobility | Internal migration | Total |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Journeys to all other services | Count | 40715 | 10487 | 51202 |
| | Expected Count | 24174.2 | 27027.8 | 51202.0 |
| | % | 59.0% of Residential Mobility | 13.6% of Internal Migration | 35.0% |
| | Adjusted Residual | 181.6 | -181.6 | |
| Journeys to Women's Refuge | Count | 28342 | 66722 | 95064 |
| | Expected Count | 44882.8 | 50181.2 | 95064.0 |
| | % | 41.0% of Residential Mobility | 86.4% of Internal Migration | 65.0% |
| | Adjusted Residual | -181.6 | 181.6 | |
| | Total valid cases | 69057 | 77209 | 146266 |
| | Origin location missing | | | 992 |
| | TOTAL | | | 147258 |
| Crosstabulation. Women, domestic violence as primary need, relocating to services 2003-11 n=146,266 Chi-Square = 32988.841 (df=1) p<0.001 Phi = 0.475 | | | | |

Table 1. Crosstabulation of women relocating to refuges and other services

| | | |
|--|---------|-------------|
| | | |
| Journeys to all other services | Mean | 30.7 miles |
| | Median | 14.9 miles |
| | Minimum | 1.3 miles |
| | Maximum | 424.1 miles |
| Journeys to Women's Refuge | Mean | 38.6 miles |
| | Median | 18.3 miles |
| | Minimum | 1.3 miles |
| | Maximum | 464.3 miles |
| Mann-Whitney U Test. Women, domestic violence as primary need, relocating across LA boundaries to services 2003-11 n=77,209 Test statistic = 314267911.5 p<0.001 | | |

Table 2. Comparison of internal migration distances to refuges and other services

For two years the datasets include records of men at risk of domestic violence. Again, the wide range of service types included ensures that there are records of men at risk of domestic violence whether or not there are specialist services for them, and where domestic violence is a secondary need as well as where it is the primary reason for them seeking help. Across all Supporting People housing-related services, men are just over half of the people seeking help, and in 2009-11 they were 50.1% of the total 470,533. However, the proportions are very different where domestic violence is a factor, with men as 3.1%, and only 1.7% where risk of domestic violence is the primary need. It is therefore clear that men seek support on a wide range of issues at an equal rate to women, but where domestic violence is the issue, they are a tiny minority. The large sample size of these administrative data means that further analysis is possible, enabling statistically significant findings that, where domestic violence is a factor, men are more likely not to have relocated to access a service, and – if they have relocated – to have relocated within the local authority rather than crossing administrative boundaries (Table 3). They are also significantly less likely to be accompanied by children (Table 4).

| | | Not re-located | Within LA | Under 6.25 miles | 6.25 - 17.78 miles | 17.79 - 42.13 miles | 42.14 - 125 miles | Over 125 miles | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Male | Count | 441 | 354 | 11 | 55 | 19 | 11 | 10 | 901 |
| | Expected Count | 280.2 | 288.7 | 32.8 | 127.9 | 89.9 | 59.9 | 21.6 | 901.0 |
| | Adjusted Residual | 11.7 | 4.7 | -3.9 | -7.0 | -7.9 | -6.6 | -2.5 | |
| Female | Count | 15897 | 16476 | 1904 | 7401 | 5221 | 3481 | 1248 | 51628 |
| | Expected Count | 16057.8 | 16541.3 | 1882.2 | 7328.1 | 5150.1 | 3432.1 | 1236.4 | 51628.0 |
| | Adjusted Residual | -11.7 | -4.7 | 3.9 | 7.0 | 7.9 | 6.6 | 2.5 | |
| | Total | 16338 | 16830 | 1915 | 7456 | 5240 | 3492 | 1258 | 52529 |
| Crosstabulation. Domestic violence as primary need 2009-11 n=52,529 Chi-Square = 269.731 (df=6) p<0.001 Cramer's V = 0.072 | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3. Crosstabulation of men and women accessing services due to domestic violence

| | | Not accompanied by children | Accompanied by children | Total |
|---|-------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------|
| Male | Count | 1745 | 214 | 1959 |
| | Expected Count | 1079.7 | 879.3 | 1959.0 |
| | Adjusted Residual | 30.7 | -30.7 | |
| Female | Count | 32606 | 27762 | 60368 |
| | Expected Count | 33271.3 | 27096.7 | 60368.0 |
| | Adjusted Residual | -30.7 | 30.7 | |
| | Total | 34351 | 27976 | 62327 |
| Crosstabulation. Domestic violence as a need 2009-11 n=62,327 Chi-Square = 943.008 (df=1) p<0.001 Phi = 0.123 | | | | |

Table 4. Crosstabulation of men and women with domestic violence as a need

It can therefore be concluded that the vast majority of domestic violence services should be provided for women – often accompanied by children – and that men’s needs are likely to be different as they are more likely to be staying put and staying local when they seek support. In terms of this research, the focus on women’s experiences and journeys is thereby confirmed as an appropriately gendered analysis.

The pattern of spatial churn across the country

Local service datasets typically have information on local women accessing local services, and women from elsewhere seeking help, but often do not have the scope to understand what happens to local women who move away due to domestic violence. Here, again, the England-wide data enable analysis across administrative boundaries: a way of safely tracking women’s hidden journeys. The patterns that emerge have been discussed in detail elsewhere

(Bowstead, 2015a), so the emphasis in this article is the importance of the data evidence in revealing these patterns. Maps of the South West of England, show two mapping techniques: Figure 1 shows the flow lines between local authority centroids representing one year of journeys, with the width of the line indicating the number of women travelling that route to access a service; Figure 2 shows a choropleth map which shades local authorities according to the rate of net leaving per female population – the rate of leaving minus the rate of arriving.

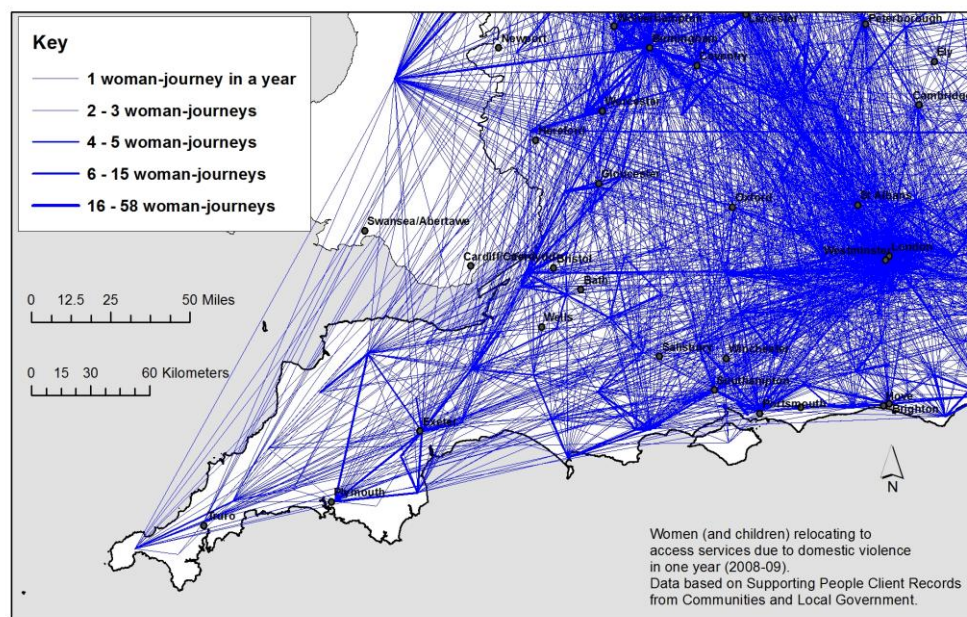


Figure 1. One year of flow lines – relocation across local authority boundaries

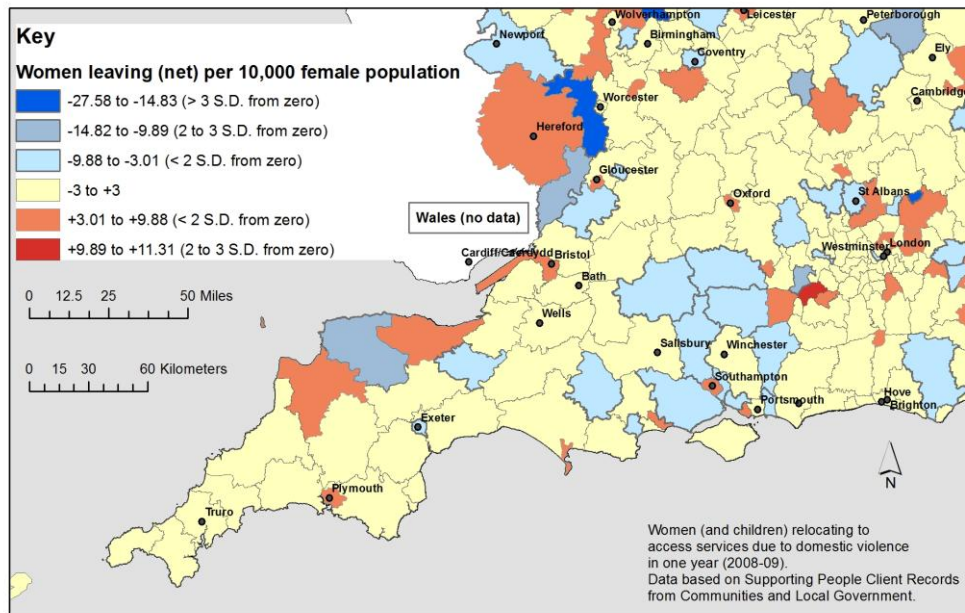


Figure 2. Rate of net leaving per female population in local authority – one year.

Only one year of data is shown because the volume of flows per year is so large, however the patterns are very similar each year. It can also be seen that most flows are only of one woman, and, across the country, over 95% were travelled by ten or fewer women within a twelve-month period (Bowstead, 2015a). Whilst some local authorities in Figure 2 are shaded blue (or hash lines/dots in black and white), indicating more women arriving to access services than leaving, others show the reverse net effect (shaded red, or solid greyscale in black and white). The most striking finding is that the majority of local authorities have a rate of around zero (-3 to +3 women per 10,000 female population), with similar numbers of women arriving and leaving each year. This pattern of spatial churn with no strong net effect and no major flows is similarly visualised in the mass of flow lines to and from every local authority in Figure 1. Though many local authorities do not provide specialist domestic violence services, all have women leaving due to domestic violence.

The geographical scale and administrative boundary issues

The flow map in Figure 1 particularly highlights women's journeys across administrative boundaries, and the issue of the geographical scale of women's help-seeking – and therefore support service provision. Whilst nearly half of those who relocate (as well as all who stay put but access support services) stay within their local authority and would therefore be recorded in local data collection, this still leaves half who may not be recorded in purely local datasets. Figure 3 shows that, whilst the local is the scale of many women's help-seeking, the region is an important scale for most other women; and under 16% cross regional boundaries or come from outside England.

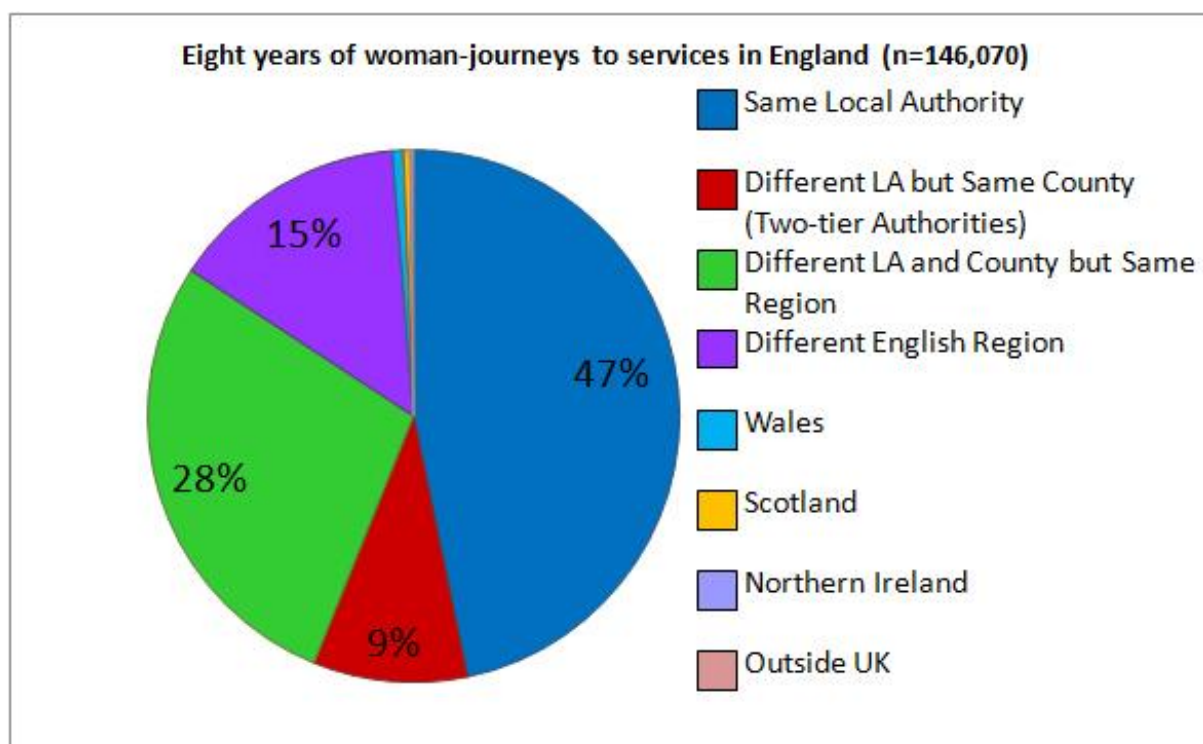


Figure 3. Proportions of women relocating within and across boundaries.

A comparison between English regions shows that some are more self-contained than others in terms of women's help-seeking. Figure 4 shows that 90% or more woman-journeys remain within the same region in the North East, North West, West Midlands and South West. London, as a region, shows the most help-seeking beyond its boundaries, but still over 75% of London women stay within London to access services.



Figure 4. Proportions of women relocating within English regions.

The London example indicates the problem of relying on local data sources to understand women's help-seeking, and to provide appropriate services in terms of capacity, type and location. London is increasingly highlighting the importance of London-wide data collection (MOPAC, 2018, p.99), to improve the evidence base for decisions on service provision and funding. However, this will only include three-quarters of the journeys women make – within London Boroughs, between London Boroughs, and into London from elsewhere – and leave hidden the fourth part of the picture: women's journeys out of London to elsewhere. In

contrast, the England-wide data enables all four aspects to be visualised and analysed, as shown in Figure 5, which shows one year of data, and shows that, in fact, more women leave London than arrive in London from elsewhere.

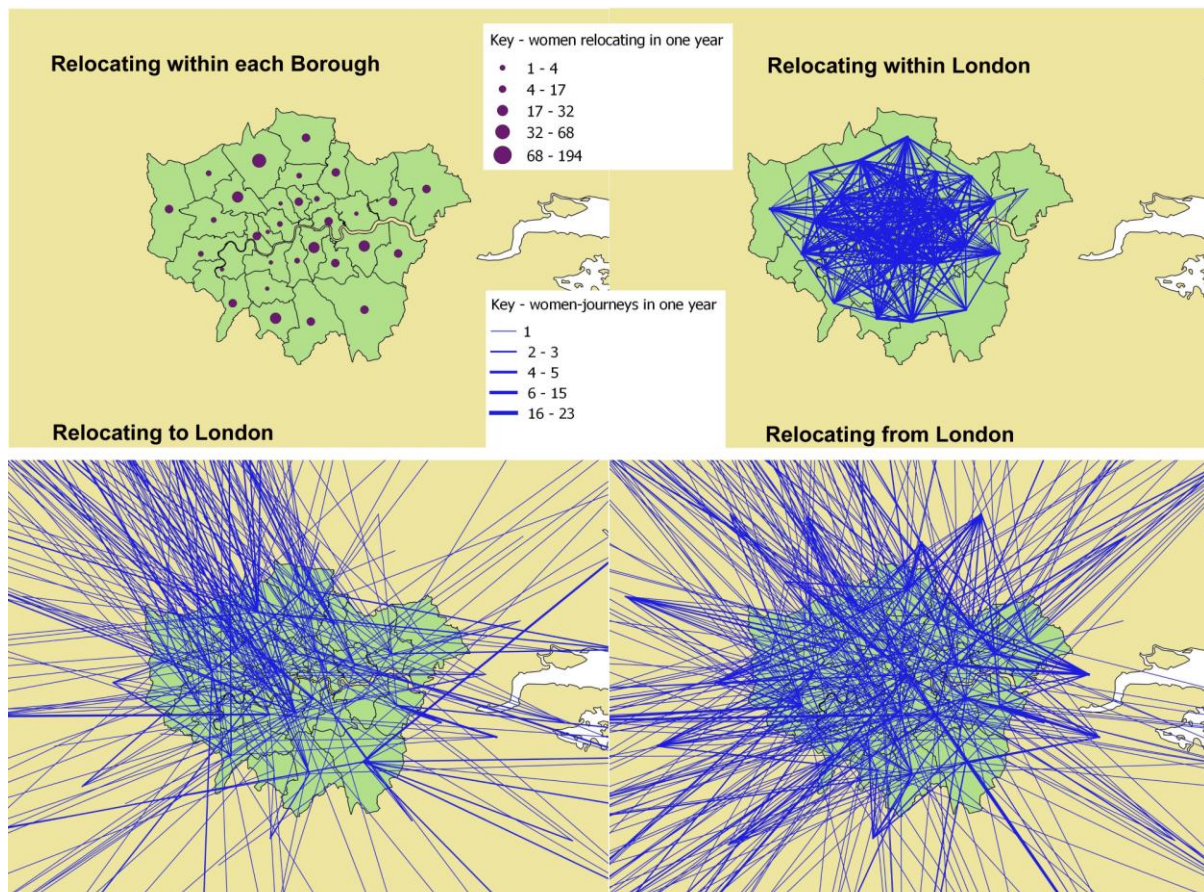


Figure 5. Woman journeys within boroughs, within London and to and from London.

This illustrates a very significant aspect of women's journeys which had not been previously understood: that all major cities are net leaving in terms of women's help seeking, with more women leaving to access services elsewhere, than arriving to access services. It indicates the value of datasets which cross administrative boundaries and are therefore able to piece together the segments of women's complex journeys (Bowstead, 2017).

Women on the move before and after accessing services

The piecing together of the complexity of women's journeys is also indicated by a fourth key empirical insight enabled by analysis of these administrative datasets. From May 2007, the Supporting People programme required data collection at the point of service exit as well as intake. For service management purposes, this provides evidence not only of length of stay in a service, but also of a range of service outcomes achieved, enabling monitoring and evaluation of services. However, in this research, it also provides useful evidence of any further relocations on leaving a service, and the type of housing tenure an individual moves to. The Special Licence data includes a linking variable which would enable analysis of the trajectories of individuals, including potentially multiple service stays. But the focus here is simply on the aggregate data on housing tenure before and after accessing services. What is clear from Figure 6 is that many women are already on the move before accessing support services. Just under half (44.6%) of women are already in shared or temporary accommodation, rather than owner-occupation or tenancies in the private or social housing sectors.

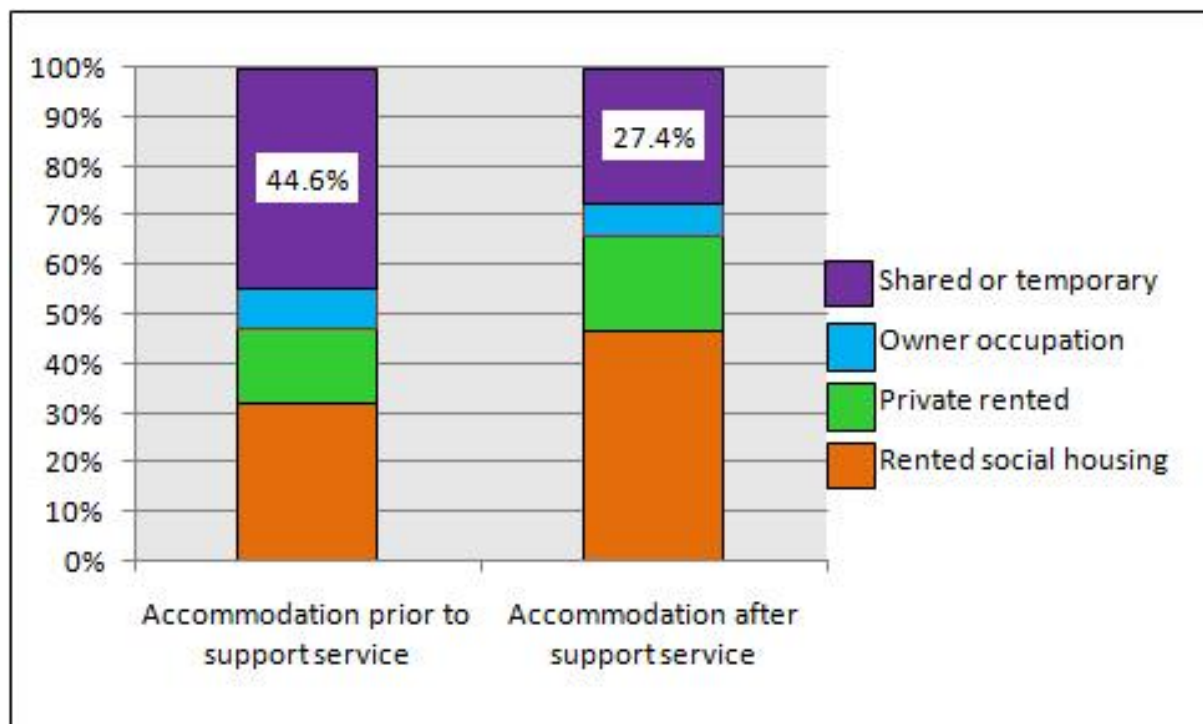


Figure 6. Women's accommodation type before and after accessing services

Women's housing insecurity continues, with over a quarter (27.4%) leaving services to shared or temporary accommodation, rather than more settled housing in the private or social housing sectors. It is clear that for many women, a service stay represents a time of support, but not necessarily a single episode of housing insecurity within otherwise settled circumstances. As well as the women moving to shared or temporary accommodation, it is important to remember that tenancies are increasingly insecure, with a common cause of homelessness being the end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private sector (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017, p.64), and with the end of lifetime tenancies in social housing (DCLG, 2013). A small, but possibly significant, counter-trend is the Secure Tenancies (Domestic Violence) Act 2018 recently passed in the UK Parliament (Bourne of Aberystwyth & Javid, n.d.). If enacted, this should ensure that anyone who leaves a secure social housing tenancy in England due to domestic violence will be offered the same security of tenure on rehousing, even if this is in a different local authority. However, overall, the administrative

data presented in this article indicate the extent to which women are on complex, multi-stage journeys due to domestic violence, with the consequent upheaval and insecurity for them and their children. It is also worth noting that over half of the women accessing services were accompanied by dependent children under 18, and therefore examples of further potential analysis would include differences in the journeys of women with and without children.

Conclusions

This article has outlined key insights on women's domestic violence journeys which have been enabled by analysis of administrative datasets which were developed to monitor a funding programme for housing-related support services in England. The numerical scale of the journeys is considerable, with tens of thousands of women and children relocating to access services due to domestic violence. This forced internal migration is highly gendered, and the wide range of services covered by the data ensures that information is available on journeys to non-specialist services, and where domestic violence is not the primary need. Despite the large numbers involved, the journeys are often hidden, not least because of the lack of net effect across the country. The overall pattern is of spatial churn, with no major flows between particular local authorities. However, it is only because of the England-wide scope of these datasets that this geographical scale can be analysed, and journeys tracked across administrative boundaries. When data collection remains boundaried within authority areas, or regions such as London, there will be a failure to identify those who leave the area, and a risk that service decisions are made based on partial or skewed information. The data analysis discussed here enables a recognition of the geographical scale of women's help-seeking, and suggests that the region is the most appropriate scale to consider service provision in terms of capacity, type and locations. However, it also indicates that many

women are already on the move before accessing services, and continue to be in temporary or insecure accommodation on leaving services, highlighting that even datasets of this scale provide only a partial picture of the complexity of women's help-seeking due to domestic violence.

They also provide an increasingly historical insight. Data collection was on service intake from April 2003 to March 2011, and on service exits from May 2007 to March 2011. The Special Licence data provide a rich opportunity for the research analysis presented here, indicating the methodological potential of using such administrative monitoring data. However, no such data coverage existed before the Supporting People programme, or afterwards. Some Administering Authorities continued to contract the Centre for Housing Research at St Andrews for data management, and supplied their data. However, such fragmentary data collection and aggregation is less useful – both for Authorities wanting to benchmark against other areas, and for research – and that data project reduced in coverage each year and ended in March 2015 (Centre for Housing Research, 2015). The data collected between 2011 and 2015 seem to have been regarded as contract data which were not de-identified or archived, and have not been made available for research. The situation in England is therefore that we know less about women and children's current help-seeking to escape domestic violence than we do about journeys ten years ago; and decisions on service cuts and restrictions are being made at the local level, by local authorities without the necessary evidence base.

This article therefore concludes with an ethical question, about administrative data collection in England, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. Service funding programmes, around social issues such as domestic violence, or where domestic violence may be a factor in support

needs, generally require the collection of monitoring data. Such data is often extensive, including demographic variables, location information, support needs and service outcomes; which require considerable administrative labour of service staff, and the willingness of individuals using services to disclose such details. There is an ethical question, therefore, about using such data purely for service monitoring, and then bemoaning a lack of data on which to base decisions of policy, practice and service provision. Funding programmes are currently unlikely to require either the de-identification and archiving of such data or the consistency of questions and variables over time which would enable comparisons and the identification of trends. In addition, funding programmes are often geographically boundaried, so that neighbouring local authorities provide different services and record different data in incompatible systems. Domestic violence is a major boundary-crossing issue, with tens of thousands of women and children relocating, and understanding its implications is therefore particularly affected by differences across administrative boundaries.

The findings on domestic violence journeys presented in this article therefore provide an insight on women's help-seeking which has been under-recognised. Many countries will have similar administrative data from monitoring service funding programmes, which could enable similar research on women and children's hidden journeys as they seek safety from domestic abuse. However, the situation at present is that such data are rarely archived and made available for research; and similar research to that presented in this article has not been identified to date in other countries. As a result, service provision and planning is based on limited evidence of how women use relocation journeys, and where and when they access services; and on limited understanding of trends over time and geography. Administrative data from services could be de-identified, archived and used as a safe way to research women

on the move due to domestic violence, and enable services and authorities – in many countries – to make better decisions on meeting their needs.

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Key Messages:

- Administrative data from service monitoring records help-seeking due to domestic violence
- Administrative data can be used to provide much larger samples than from survey or qualitative methods
- Data needs to cross administrative boundaries to reveal geographical patterns and to be archived to provide evidence over time

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